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# WHY I HAVE NOT GONE TO THE SOUTH.

[The following letter, in reply to an inquiry as above, was written by a gentleman of Warrington, England—a man of education and high moral and Christian character—who passed the Summer and early Autumn of 1858 in travelling in the United States.]

Boston, Sept. 16, 1858.

My Dear Sir: I have been frequently asked, by the apologists and defenders of the slave system, in this country—"Have you been to the South?" "See the institution as it exists, before you condemn it," &c. As the request seems a plausible one, I now wish to state my reasons why a journey to the South, to see the state of the slave population there, must be worse than useless, for its proposed end; and why, humanly speaking, it could lead to nothing but mystification and deception. The slave-owner and his apologists seem to imagine, that the only conceivable evil of slavery consists in the lash of the overseer; excessive and wasting labor; privation of food, and the non-allowance of time for occasional recreation.

Now, I would most cheerfully—if only the issue of the question of the righteousness of slaveholding could be raised before some just tribunal, whose decision should be held binding in the case—give the slave-owner the benefit of admission—that no slave ever was lashed, or had his life shortened one minute, by labor and privation of any kind; and that his life was one of continued jollity from the cradle to the grave; and I tell him that the issue

would not be one whit the less doubtful. No man can be a slave-owner without believing or practising a lie; and no man can be a slave without injury to his whole nature—intellectual, moral and spiritual—and these together constitute the damnable sin of slavery in the first degree.

Now, no man journeying through the South could, by so doing, see more clearly this lie which the slave-owner cherishes in his heart of hearts, and lives by as a divine truth; nor would such journey reveal, more clearly, the moral degradation of the slave, than the fact that he is so brutified as to submit to a bondage which, if his soul were only a few degrees higher and purer than it is, would end in open rebellion; war to the knife, and death to every slaveholder and every abettor of slavery where the bondage existed. These things are clear as the noon-day sun. And lashes more or less bloody, labor more or less wasting, and pork more or less liberally doled out, are matters of so comparatively small concern, that how it could ever enter into men's heads to place the issue of this great question upon such facts only, is to me utterly inexplicable. The only apparent reason is, that slaveholding has demented the master at the same time that it brutifies his victim. St. Paul describes the last state of reprobation of the Gentile world as one in which "God had given them up to strong delusion that they should believe a lie, who had pleasure in unrighteousness."

What truth can be clearer than that the man who accumulates his wealth by taking forcibly or fraudulently from others the daily produce of their labor, and only gives them, in return, such food and shelter as he gives to his horses and cattle, and for the same motive, that they

may work more efficiently for his gain—I ask, what truth can be clearer than that such a man is a thief and robber in the sight of God? If he is not a thief, who is? Bring the black hired slave into court: "I earned five dollars last week, and this white man took three, and only left me two to provide food and lodging and clothes for myself." The American nation justifies this theft; and it is their crime and their shame that they do so; but their doing so cannot alter the everlasting principles of right and truth, or make the armed power which sustains the white thief in his crime other than one of brute force and oppression. Such national crime does all it can do to pervert and pollute the national conscience. The American nation makes physical strength the arbiter and judge of all moral principle, and, by so doing, dethrones God, and becomes an agent of hell.

But it is a comparatively small matter that the slave owner is a thief. If this was his only crime, he might still be a being of comparative purity and holiness. He is a murderer of the souls as well as the bodies of men. He declares the slave is not fit for freedom. And yet he bred him, kept him from infancy to manhood, but took special care that no faculty should be developed that did not serve his lust for gain! Laws are passed, making it a crime to teach him to read. The intellect that God has given, and by the gift revealed the duty of cultivation, is stultified by enforced neglect. The spirit that was made for progress is enfeebled and chained down, and kept in the swaddling-bands of infancy; and all that he can do to destroy the ever-living soul of his brother man he does, to gratify his lust for gain! And I am to go into the South, to see the institution, before I condemn it! And

if I go, they will try to show me a man so brutified that he shall rejoice before me in his degradation! And because they have succeeded in making him a *non-rebellious* slave, I am to join them in exulting over the moral ruin! And because they still have doubts of their own ability to keep the man in chains by their own power, I am to help them in adding mine to aid in such hellish work! And the North does it—gives them the aid they need, and covers it up, all over, with the Bible! And I am to go into the South specially to see whether I cannot be brought over to their side! I am not to go to teach the black man his rights and duties before God, but to become the auxiliary of the slave-owner; for if I do not become that, I can do nothing. Except that, if I act as a Christian, I have, as the certain result, legal imprisonment, or illegal lynch law. I will not go to the South.

Yours very truly, W. Robson.

*American Anti-Slavery Society*, 138 *Nassau street, New York.*

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